

## Legends of Cashin Mine; Weslopex and the Murder of Slim Hecox

*I peered into the adit as I eyed the buckled timbers blocking my view. “What do you think? That collapse looks old. You’d think by now the mine would have stabilized, right?”*

*“Hmm.” Cryptocartography shone his flashlight past me and furrowed his brow. “I imagine. That carving at the entrance said ‘1898’ and this is sandstone, so it’s probably settled by now. Anything seriously unstable likely collapsed years ago.”*

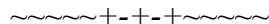
*“True. I want to see if this goes far enough to be worth coming back for, but I don’t want to go too deep without a gas meter.” I chewed my lip for a moment. “I’ll be the canary, hang back and pull me out if I go down?”*

*“Sure,” he agreed. “Try not to die!” I crept down into the mine and paused to take a deep breath. No bad air symptoms so far, and I felt emboldened by the steady breeze blowing through the tunnel. I turned my shoulders and carefully squeezed past the broken timbers before peering around the corner. My jaw dropped.*

*“Dude, c’mere! You need to see this,” I called. Cryptocartography hurried over and squeezed past the partial collapse himself.*

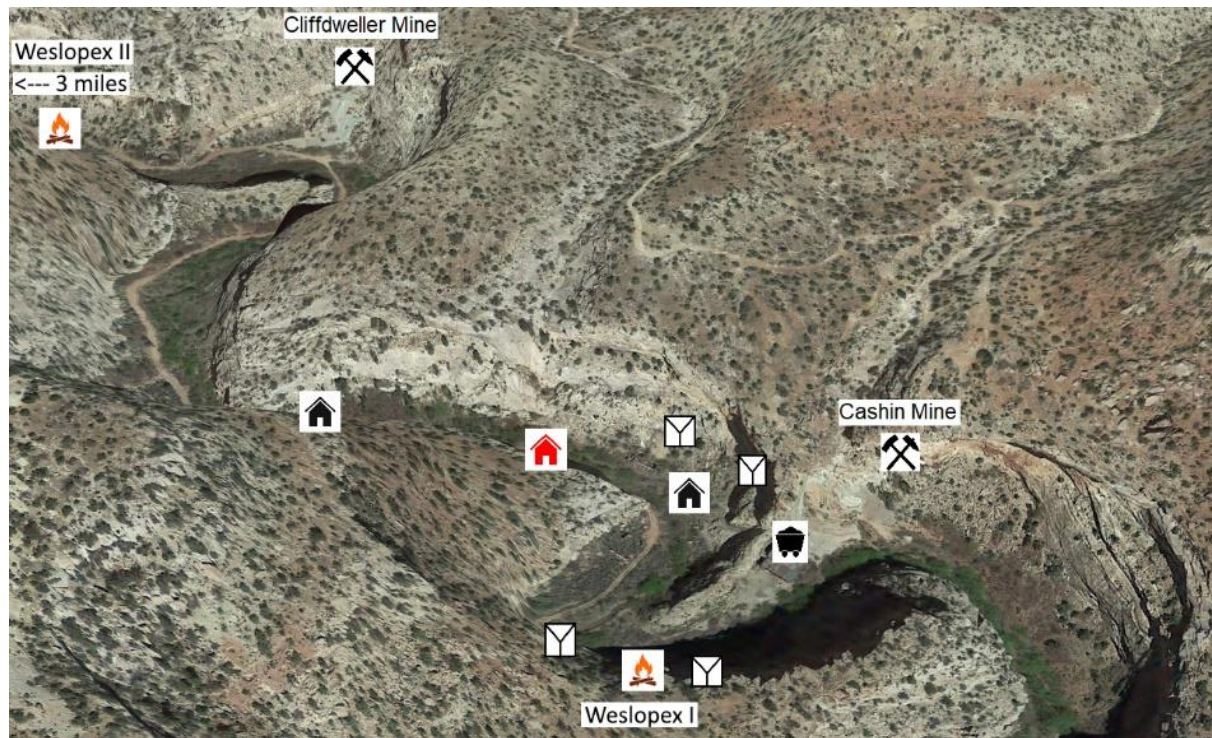
*“Oh my god, this is incredible!” he exclaimed. In front of us laid a section of tunnel unlike any I’d ever seen before. The passage before us was a vivid kaleidoscope of blues and greens and yellows, every inch literally dripping with a crust of mineral deposits like something out of a myth or a story.*

*“Forget the original plan,” Cryptocartography said gleefully. “Let’s do this for Weslopex instead!” We grinned at each other and began to plan.*

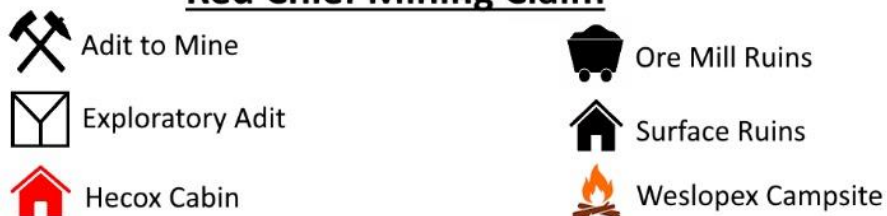




**Figure 1:** An explorer discovers a brightly colored mineral formation in Cashin Mine. To clarify, this is the authentic coloration- no photo editing trickery, it really did look like this.



### Red Chief Mining Claim



Information  
compiled by Aran,  
2022, sourced from  
"Murder at the  
Cashin Mine" by the  
Rimrocker  
Historical Society.

*Figure 2: A map of the section of canyon where Cashin Mine is located.*

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Weslopex was never originally meant to be a big meetup. It was supposed to be a small one-time event, a meagre handful of local explorers using my apartment at the time as a home base to spend a weekend hitting numerous small spots across the Western Slope. But when Cryptocartography and I discovered a copper mine with unusual mineral formations while doing some last-minute scouting the weekend prior, we were so enthralled that we revamped the entire meetup into a three-day backcountry camping trip and quickly threw together the logistics in under a week to make it happen.

We held the first Weslopex meetup under the banner of the Bureau of Exploration in October 2022. The Bureau is a loose Colorado-based collective of artists and urban explorers

masquerading as a fictional government agency while taking inspiration from early public art groups. This was the first time we had ever brought everyone together in one big group and we wanted something suitably impressive for the occasion. When we stumbled upon this mine, both Cryptocartography and I were certain that we'd found what we were looking for. Not only did it have incredible mineral formations, but it had an insane wild west history to match.

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*Figure 3: One of several adits to Cashin Mine with some destroyed minecart tracks.*



*Figure 4: Explorers admiring the mineral formations in Cashin Mine.*

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Deep beneath the Slaughterhouse of the West, where the gaze of a skull shaped mountain meets the headwaters of the River of Sorrow lies a mine called Cashin. A prospector staked the first claim at Cashin in 1895 and it quickly grew to become a highly productive copper mining camp by 1897. By the early 1920s the mine shut down due to a combination of low-quality ore yield

and flooding in the lower levels, so a man named Slim Hecox was appointed caretaker and watchman over the vacant mine. Though he couldn't have known it at the time, this position would lead him straight to his death.

Cashin Mine is located in the far southwestern corner of Colorado, deep within the canyons of Paradox Valley. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Paradox was a lawless, unforgiving land populated by folks with quick tempers and quicker trigger fingers. So many murders, robberies, and gunfights occurred in this area that it earned the nickname "The Slaughterhouse of the West" and local legend holds to this day that the town of Paradox got its name because "one doc just wasn't enough." Shootouts and senseless killings were just a part of life in Paradox, and it took a certain type of person to merely survive in that town.

Slim Hecox fit right in. A gunslinger from Iowa with a wife and child in Kansas City, Hecox was a tough and fearless man with an arrogant streak a mile wide. His work as a watchman eventually gained him a fortune of about \$3000 (\$50,000 today when adjusted for inflation). But Hecox was not content to simply hoard his wealth. He made a habit of strolling around Paradox each week with every dollar of that fortune strapped to his belt, flanked on either side by a Colt .45 as he loudly dared any man to duel him for it. Nobody ever took him up on his challenge. Widely regarded as the fastest draw and best shot in the county, it was said that there wasn't a man alive in Paradox who could take Hecox in a gunfight and win.

Late in November of 1921, Hecox missed his weekly visit to town and a few of his friends journeyed up to his cabin outside the Cashin Mine to check up on him. Inside they found a pool of blood in his kitchen and a trail leading to a storage room. It was there they found Hecox's decapitated corpse buried under a pile of oats with just one arm sticking out, the other cradling a planted gun with mismatched shells that appeared to be arranged in a poor attempt to make his death look like a suicide. When his cabin was searched, it was found that all \$3000 of his fortune had been stolen.

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*Figure 5: The ruins of Slim Hecox's cabin at the bottom of the canyon.*





*Figure 6: The interior of Slim Hecox's cabin, inside the same room where he was murdered.*

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True to form for a group that was as dedicated to art as it was to exploring, the fledgling Bureau of Exploration arrived for Weslopex I in a variety of costumes. Ironically for a landlocked desert state, the prevailing theme was pirates. After ditching the 2WD vehicles at the entrance to the canyon we continued onward in the 4WD vehicles despite not having enough seats. We made quite a sight as our small convoy drove into the canyon, loudly blasting pirate metal music as explorers hung off the back of jeeps and trucks for dear life with one hand while waving swords and black flags with the other.

We set up camp at the very end of the rough dirt road, on the water's edge just across the creek from the ore mill. A clutter of surface ruins surrounded us on all sides and we had just enough space for the eight of us to set up camp comfortably. Spirits were high our first night in the canyon and night fell just as we finished setting up camp. Everyone had a few drinks with dinner



and we made a brief first attempt at the mine before realizing inside that we should probably wait until morning to sober up before going any deeper.

Unfortunately, dawn brought complications. One explorer had to return to Denver early due to health issues, and though it wasn't an emergency the backcountry was still a bad place for medical complications. Half the group returned with him while the other half stayed behind to finish exploring as much as we could. We tried to make the best of the situation, but our second night in the canyon felt drastically different.

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**Figure 7:** *The campsite for Weslopex I, right across the creek from Cashin Mine.*



**Figure 8:** *The attendees of Weslopex I use swords to roast hot dogs over the fire.*

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*“Gah, why won’t it stay lit?” I groaned in frustration as I tossed more sticks on the fire and fanned the flames. “This wood is bone dry, our fire shouldn’t be going out this quick.” It wasn’t that the wood was burning up too quickly either- it just seemed like nothing we did could get the wood to ignite at all, no matter how dry it was.*

*Jackson emerged out of the darkness. “I’ve got more firewood, maybe this will catch?” A cold gust of wind rushed through our camp and blew our struggling fire out again. I took a deep breath and sighed.*

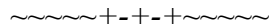


*“Here, let me try.” Cryptocartography took the piece of cardboard from me and frantically fanned the coals while Jackson and I fed the flames. After a couple of tries, the three of us managed to get a small fire to stay burning. We sat back in our chairs and talked for a while.*

*“Hey, did you hear that?” Mads asked. We all stopped talking. “There it is again. It sounds like people.” Sure enough, I could just barely hear what sounded like voices in the distance.*

*“I hear it too, but I can’t tell what they’re saying,” I said. “It... doesn’t sound like words.” Another cold gust of wind blew through camp. I shivered and pulled my jacket tighter around my shoulders as our fire sputtered and the shadows of the canyon pressed closer.*

*Jackson peered into the darkness. “It’s probably just the sound of the creek bouncing off the canyon walls. Echoes can do weird things after all,” he suggested. We murmured in agreement, but none of us could seem to shake the unease that had plagued us all night.*



On our second night the moon didn’t rise until well after midnight, so the bottom of the canyon was shrouded in pitch darkness. The only source of light besides our flashlights was a small fire that we couldn’t seem to keep burning no matter how much dry wood we fed it. But by far what was most unnerving were the sounds. Perhaps it was just the distorted sound of the creek bouncing off the canyon walls, but all throughout the night we heard what sounded like the incomprehensible babbling of distant voices in the desert around us. I even heard what sounded like a friend’s voice clearly calling my name several times from deeper in the canyon, even though that was impossible because said friend had returned to Denver earlier that day.

Rather than succumb to superstition, we eventually decided to brush off our unease and finish what we started by returning to the mine well after dark. Unfortunately, the group that had returned to Denver had taken our only gas meter so when all of us developed the exact same piercing headache between the eyes we suspected bad air. We decided to play it safe and exit the mine to take spooky photos outside with road flares instead where the air was fresher.

As the sun rose over Cashin the next morning and we packed up camp, we conceded that exploring every corner of the mine just wasn’t in the cards for that trip. But despite not being a total success, the first Weslopex had served its purpose as a trial run for a full-scale meetup. Armed with a much better understanding of the canyon and its hazards, we immediately began

laying the groundwork for Weslopex II. Part of that meant learning the rest of the story about Slim Hecox and his murder almost a century prior.

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**Figure 9:** *An explorer holds a burning road flare on a ledge partway up the canyon walls, right next to the main adit to Cashin Mine.*



**Figure 10:** *Lighting up the adit to Cashin Mine. The founding date is carved into the wall, likely by one of the original miners.*

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Hecox's murder immediately threw all of Paradox into an uproar. Speculation in the newspapers ran wild for a month as the sheriff scrambled for any leads. Eventually he settled on a man named James Gazaway as the primary suspect. Already a notorious troublemaker and suspected member of an outlaw gang, Gazaway was among the group that first found Hecox's body. The sheriff thought Gazaway was suspiciously eager to start muddying the waters with far-flung accusations as soon as the murder was reported, but he didn't have enough evidence to make an arrest.

Through a stroke of luck, a group of private detectives were passing through Paradox around this time. The sheriff discreetly got in contact with them, deputized them, and hired them to investigate Gazaway. These detectives went undercover and infiltrated the outlaw camp that



Gazaway frequented, quietly asking questions and gathering evidence. When a sniper tried to assassinate the detectives after several days of sleuthing, they knew their cover was blown and the sheriffs of surrounding counties began openly rounding up Gazaway's fellow gang members.

Two of them, young men by the names of John Miller and Dean Meyers, immediately staged a short-lived jailbreak which only solidified suspicions that they were somehow tied to the murder. By early January 1922, seven of Gazaway's associates were in jail and they were beginning to crack under pressure. Detectives found Gazaway's diary which named him as the leader of the seventeen-man outlaw gang and detailed their various crimes. This gave them cause to search the homes of some of his lieutenants, and inside one home they found Hecox's gold watch and about \$850. This damning evidence combined with a bluff about fingerprint forensics finally caused Miller and Meyers to cave and they each independently gave a full confession.

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**Figure 11:** *This ladder ascends 300 feet up a ventilation shaft to the surface above the canyon. Cryptocartography and I attempted to climb it during Weslopex II- I turned back about 100 feet up, while he managed to make it 250 feet before he felt it too unstable to continue.*





***Figure 12:** More mineral formations inside Cashin Mine. They are most likely a mix of sulfur, copper oxide, copper sulfide, and copper sulfate deposits suspended in a salt or calcium crust.*

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Miller and Meyers admitted to visiting Hecox on Thanksgiving Eve. Though he had been wary of the pair when he first met them, the two gained Hecox's trust over several months until he felt comfortable enough to disarm around them. After sharing a holiday dinner and drinks with the watchman, Miller and Meyers shot him three times in the back of the head while his back was turned to grab them more whiskey. Then they decapitated him to prevent the authorities from determining the caliber of the murder weapons, before burying his head with part of his fortune in an irrigation ditch three miles away.

The interviewer who recorded their confessions said that they exhibited no remorse, even bragging and laughing as they confessed to the gruesome murder. Their confessions were verified when



the head and money were found just where the two said they'd be. Local papers claimed that the sight of Hecox's brutalized head whipped the townsfolk into such a rage that a lynching was only avoided because the sheriff wouldn't tell the angry mob where he was keeping the prisoners.

Miller and Meyers both implicated Gazaway as an accomplice to the murder. The three of them had been planning Hecox's murder for months and had workshopped a wide variety of murder methods. Gazaway was even rumored to have seduced Hecox explicitly to get close enough to kill him while his guard was down when they were in bed together. Though Hecox was a bit of a recluse, he trusted Gazaway enough to let him spend the night numerous times, going so far as to try and convince the undercover outlaw to take care of some of his money once while drunk.

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**Figure 13:** A group of explorers wave the Bureau of Exploration flag over the ruins of the ore mill, standing on the ledge next to the main adit to Cashin Mine.





*Figure 14: The interior of the ore mill ruins, located just outside Cashin Mine.*

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But as time went on, Gazaway seemed to be dragging his feet about killing Hecox despite being the one to originally plot his death. Miller and Meyers grew impatient and decided to take matters into their own hands, carrying out the murder without Gazaway so that they could claim a larger share of the fortune by cutting him out of the profit. They turned on Gazaway in part because he insisted that he deserved a portion of the money for planning the robbery even if he didn't actually carry it out. But their confessions also unveiled an even greater conspiracy.

Gazaway had been spearheading a plot to massacre the entire population of Paradox. It was a deceptively simple plan- he and his fellow outlaws would hire a traveling moving picture show to come to town. Back in those days this would be the event of the year and everyone for miles around would surely attend it. Once the show had begun, Gazaway and his gang would barricade



the doors and gun down every last man, woman, and child in Paradox. Then they'd loot the town of everything valuable and flee to Mexico before the rest of the world noticed the slaughter.

The bandits had already planned their escape along the so-called "Outlaw Trail," a wilderness route stretching from Canada down to Mexico where it was almost impossible to track fugitives across the rough terrain. Gazaway had begun discreetly amassing supply and munition caches along this trail in the mountainous deserts around Paradox, where the narrow canyons had so many chokepoints that it was said one man with a rifle could hold off a whole regiment of soldiers for days. Had the outlaws not tipped their hand early by murdering Hecox, their plot might have succeeded.

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**Figure 15:** A moderately stable walkway on the second level of Cashin Mine. We made it this far our first night during Weslopex I before turning back.





**Figure 16:** *A member of the Bureau of Exploration in costume. The respirators were more than just decorations though- given Cashin Mine's proximity to several large-scale historic uranium districts, potential exposure to mildly radioactive dust inside the mine was a concern.*



*Figure 17: Another member of the Bureau attempts to climb the ladder in the ventilation shaft.*

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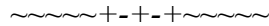
With a successful Weslopex I under our belt as a trial run, we were determined to make Weslopex II a far bigger event to show off what Colorado had to offer. Though the Bureau of Exploration remained the core organizers, we opened up invitations to other trusted explorers from across the country. A grand total of eighteen explorers from six states made the expedition out to Colorado for the meetup in July of 2023.

Despite having a year to prepare, organizing Weslopex II was still a logistical nightmare in part because half our organizing crew wasn't even living in Colorado at the time. The plan was to have everyone meet in Denver so the out of state explorers could fly in. But then we had to figure out how to get eighteen people and their camping gear to the mine, seven hours away from Denver by car down a road that required a lifted 4wd vehicle to navigate, in a location so remote



than the nearest town to resupply at was two hours away. It was a daunting task, but after months of planning we were confident that we'd be prepared this time around.

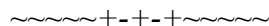
It was finally the day of the meetup. Everyone was loaded up in vehicles and ready to leave Denver when Patrick, a Bureau member who left ahead of the main caravan to prepare the campsite, called with the worst news possible. Not only was it nearly 100°F in the canyon that day, but reaching the mine had become far more difficult than the year before.



*“What do you mean the road is gone? Did you miss the turn past town?” I asked. “It should be right there on the left, it’s the only turn for fifty miles.”*

*“No, you don’t understand. The road is GONE. Looks like a washout from the rain two days ago, it’s completely gone.” Patrick’s voice was distant and scratchy through the phone. “There’s no way to reach the mine without ditching the cars and finding a way across the stream on foot, and it’s still a couple of miles to the mine from here.”*

*The other event organizers and I looked at each other, then looked over at the crowd of explorers milling around. They were relying on us to make this whole event work, and judging by the worried glances they were trying to hide it was clear everyone was getting antsy. We drew into a huddle. “Okay,” Garret started, “let’s come up with a plan. What are our options?”*

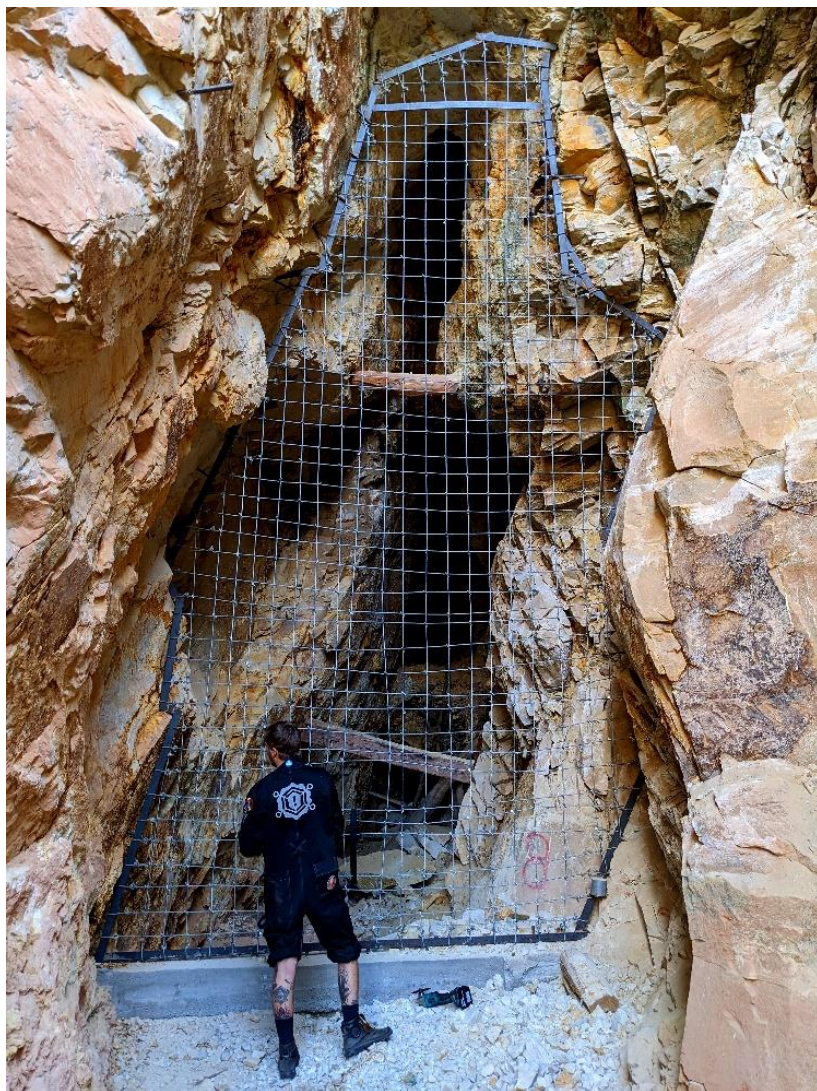






**Figure 18:** Several members of the Bureau pose near a washed-out section of road. This was one of three major washouts between the Weslopex II basecamp and Cashin Mine.





**Figure 19:** *This easily-passable gate blocked off the entrance to a smaller exploratory adit that didn't connect to the main mine. It was one of several we passed on the hike between the Weslopex II basecamp and Cashin Mine.*

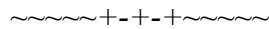
The organizer crew huddled together and furiously debated in hushed voices. Some wanted to shift the meetup into a Denver-centric event as a safer Plan B, while others wanted to start the drive out anyway and try and adapt the original plan on the fly. Patrick offered to continue looking for another way around the washouts, so after hashing out a semi-detailed game plan for both options we put it to the entire group as a vote.

The original plan won. We began the long trek out to the mine, stopping only for rest breaks and a shopping trip where we bought so many gallons of water that people had to hold them on their laps to fit all of them in the cars. Even as we drew closer to the mine, the organizer team was still



working out the details of how to fix things. By the time we reached the canyon we had decided to simply set up camp right before the first washout and hike the remaining three miles each way through the desert when it was time to explore.

At long last we had arrived. Patrick had taken it upon himself to prepare a basecamp area before we arrived, and several other newer Bureau members contributed art displays and various shelters from the sun. With our camp set up, everyone adequately supplied and logistical crises resolved, we spent the night relaxing in camp before waking the next morning ready to tackle Cashin mine and open all the exploratory adits that honeycombed the canyon. Some of these exploratory mines contained features that we all agreed were cool such as 1950s graffiti and brightly colored mineral deposits. Others were a bit more... controversial.



*Jackson dusted his hands off and took a step back. "All right, the adit's open. Who wants to go in first?"*

*"Sure, I'll go." Patrick stepped forward. He squeezed through the narrow gap between the iron bars and boldly strode into the darkness. A few seconds passed before a sharp scream pierced the air and he came stumbling out. "AHH OH GOD GETTHEMOFFME, GET THEM OFF ME!" He screamed as he frantically tore at his clothes, practically diving through narrow hole in the grate.*

*"Dude, are you okay?! What's in there?" someone asked. Patrick shuddered for a moment before composing himself.*

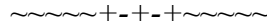
*"Spiders. Holy shit, so many spiders. There must be thousands of them," he shivered. "I HATE spiders."*

*"This I've got to see," Casper said as he squeezed through the gate themselves. He took a few steps before pausing and looking down the tunnel at something I couldn't see from the outside. "Oh my god, that really is a lot of spiders."*

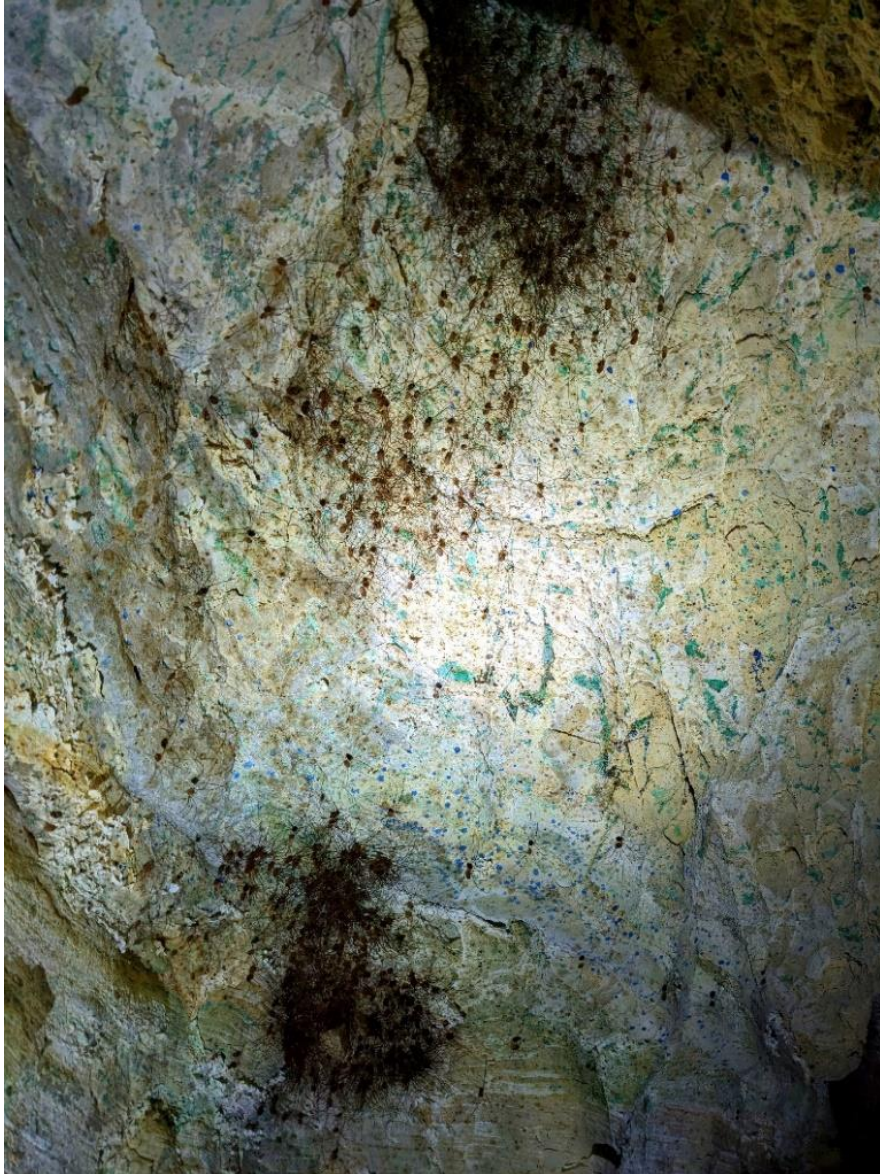
*I squeezed in after him and froze as I shone my flashlight down the tunnel. Every inch of the passage was covered in spiders, an endless mass of skittering legs and gleaming eyes so thick that I couldn't even see the tunnel walls in some places. The tunnel itself almost seemed to writhe and twist in the beam of my flashlight as the soft scratching of countless legs on stone filled the air. A cold shudder of revulsion shot down my spine. If anything, Patrick had underestimated the sheer number of spiders- I'd bet there were tens of thousands at the very least, probably more.*

*"This is pretty cool!" Casper exclaimed. "None of them are venomous, check this out. They're harmless!" He thrust his hand into the seething mass as a dozen spiders skittered up his arm. I pushed down another horrified shudder and swallowed nervously.*

*"I intend to explore every passage in this mine and I didn't come a thousand miles to be turned back by a bunch of spiders," I declared with a bravado I didn't feel. Oh god, I couldn't believe what I was about to do. Steeling myself with a deep breath, I gripped my flashlight tightly and stepped into the writhing swarm.*







**Figure 20:** Each individual brown dot in this picture is a spider, and this was just one small section of tunnel wall. Well, technically they were harvestmen (often called daddy longlegs) and not real spiders, but when you're stuck in a hole with several thousand of them the difference feels academic at best- especially when you've already seen several black widow spiders lurking elsewhere in the canyon and you don't know if there are any mixed in the swarm.





**Figure 21:** Several Weslopex attendees hike past an exploratory adit on the way to Cashin Mine.

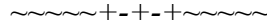
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We spent the next several hours wandering in and around the mine, from the surface ruins all the way to the deepest parts of Cashin. Well-equipped with multiple gas meters this time, we discovered that the air inside the mine was safe thanks to a steady flow through a large ventilation shaft. We pushed far deeper than ever before and successfully reached the end of every unflooded passage before exiting to track down Hecox's cabin. We even nailed a laminated historical writeup to the wall of the ore mill to help teach future visitors about the history of the mine.

We had left the majority of our water back at the base camp, so the group slowly dwindled as people ran low on water and returned to camp. Eventually I was one of the last ones still at the mine. I was determined to investigate a potential second mine further up on the cliffside and stayed behind to do so, brushing off concerns about my water reserve even as the last of my



companions turned back when they ran low. After an exhausting scramble up the cliffside I discovered that the so-called Cliffdweller Mine was flooded, but by that point the inaccessible mine was the least of my problems.

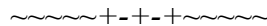


*I squeezed my eyes shut and grit my teeth as another wave of dizziness threatened to overwhelm me. Blinking the black spots from the edges of my vision, I tried to swallow down my nausea but instead choked on the thick layer of dust that coated the back of my throat. The canyon walls offered no shade from the blazing sun overhead as I licked my dry lips and began to sorely regret not turning back sooner. I knew the signs of heatstroke well but I had badly underestimated how quickly they set in, and now I was cursing myself for letting my determination blind me to the danger.*

*I looked mournfully at my water bottle as it somehow managed to feel far heavier empty than it ever had full. The faint burbling of the creek next to the trail was so tempting, and I was so painfully thirsty. Listening to the constant flow of the cool water was torture. I just needed one mouthful, a single swallow, just one couldn't hur-*

*No. No. I wrenched my gaze away from the creek and shook myself. That water was poison, irradiated by the hundreds of uranium mines upstream. Any relief it offered came with a price I refused to pay no matter how desperate I was. I checked my map again. One and a half miles to camp, one and a half miles to clean water. I could make it. I had to make it.*

*I staggered forward as the world began to spin. High above, the desert sun beat down.*



I stumbled back into camp late in the afternoon, delirious and on the verge of collapse. As a few other explorers sat me down with a gallon of water to recover from the consequences of my hubris I noticed that they had been busy in my absence. One explorer had set up a battery-powered projector rig to play movies and laser light shows along the walls of the canyon. Others had begun cooking dinner or sketching together in a big art circle. We partied long into the night as laughter and lasers filled the canyon and I eventually drifted off to sleep beneath the desert stars.

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**Figure 22:** *A group of explorers investigating a raise between two levels of Cashin Mine. Unfortunately, the lower level was flooded so this was about as far as we could go in that direction.*



*Figure 23: Some crude timbers made of charred logs inside one of the smaller exploratory adits.*

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*"I really wish we could stay another night," Garret said. The basecamp was full of the leisurely bustle of explorers packing up their gear as everyone woke up, the sun just barely peaking above the walls of the canyon.*

*I hummed in agreement as I rolled up my sleeping bag. "I do too, but most of us have work tomorrow. I can't miss my flight tonight or else I'd totally be down." I finished packing my sleeping bag and moved on to my ground pad. "I think we really did hit all the major features though, so I'm pretty satisfied with what we saw this weekend."*



*Garret cracked a tired smile. "I'd definitely say we succeeded. I'm so glad we pulled this off, it was looking pretty bad for a while there." He gazed thoughtfully around the canyon. "You said you found the watchman's cabin, right?"*

*I nodded. "Yeah, it's in ruins but it's still there. Speaking of those outlaws..."*

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Miller and Meyers were quickly convicted of Hecox's murder. Though Gazaway's trial took longer due to the fact that he only planned the murder but did not carry it out, his position as the leader of the outlaw gang plotting to slaughter the whole town did not endear him to the jury and he was convicted of murder in July of 1922. All three men were sentenced to life in prison, only avoiding the death penalty because Colorado law forbade executing anyone convicted on circumstantial evidence alone such as confessions. The townsfolk were more than happy to see them go, and the rest of the outlaw gang dispersed and fell out of the historical record afterwards.

This is the end of Miller and Meyer's story, but not Gazaway's. He made five unsuccessful jailbreak attempts over the course of his trial. Ten years into his life sentence he succeeded on his sixth and final attempt and escaped from prison in 1933. He was last seen near Cashin Mine, presumably to recover the remaining half of Hecox's fortune that the detectives were unable to find. Authorities were unable to catch Gazaway and neither he nor the missing money were ever seen again.

As for Hecox, he was buried in a wooden box made with the minimum amount of wood to fit his body due to lumber scarcity in the desert. He was exhumed after the funeral once his head was found, but the box was too short to fit his head atop his body. Lacking a better way to put his head and body back together, the townsfolk reburied him with his severed head cradled under his arm. He rests in the Paradox Cemetery to this day, still holding his own skull.

Many decades after Gazaway's escape, some possible descendants of his were found in Texas. Though they share his surname it remains unknown even to the family whether this is coincidental. If they really are his descendants then it seems likely that Gazaway may have recovered the stolen money and followed the Outlaw Trail like he originally planned, eventually raising a family in Texas and dying a free man. But some stories are lost to history and the truth may never be known for certain.

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**Figure 24:** *A group of explorers walk past some of the mining camp ruins in the canyon around Cashin.*





*Figure 25: One last look at the mineral formations inside Cashin Mine.*

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Thus ends the tales of both Hecox's murder and Weslopex. As we followed the winding modern roads of the old Outlaw Trail back towards civilization, I couldn't help but feel a strange mix of victorious melancholy. After a year of planning, we had finally accomplished everything we dreamed of in the canyon and the trials we overcame made the Bureau of Exploration stronger than ever before.



But with every last tunnel explored, the allure of mystery was gone. Cashin Mine was so remote that I wasn't sure if I'd ever return and part of me wished I didn't have to leave it behind. Though the Bureau of Exploration would surely host more meetups in the future, the logistical nightmares of Weslopex II ensured that they wouldn't be here. It was a bittersweet feeling, but even as we left Cashin Mine in our rearview mirrors I found myself already dreaming of our next adventure. It may not have been a lost fortune, but I couldn't help but feel that we'd still found a treasure of our own.

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**Figure 26:** The attendees of Weslopex II. Photo credits to GarretStopMotion.

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*Written by Aran, 2024. Special thanks to the Bureau of Exploration and all attendees of Weslopex I and II.*

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Templeton, Marie. (2016). *Murder at the Cashin Mine: A true story of murder, mystery, and the untamed Paradox Valley, Colorado*. Rimrocker Historical Society.

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[The Pueblo Chieftain: Slim, A Cowboy Who Sort of Lost His Head.](#)

[Loveland Reporter-Herald: Slim Hecox's Head Rests At His Side](#)